**Dissection**

Christina H. Felix

My shared Anatomy and Physiology lab cat,

Michael, a gray tabby from China:

sticky fur, yellowing pink gamey flesh,

stringy flaps of overlapping muscles,

disassembled guts, formaldehyde

failing to mask slow rot.

Named after my 19-year-old summer-of-love

heartbreak, for revenge, I cut into Michael

two times a week that fall semester, scalpel probing

throat, muscle, eyes, heart, testes. Startling myself

with cold interest in laying bare the dead cat interior

and my unending desire to stay hurt,

to hold onto the sweet pain of being deceived—

so simple that pain, the action of cutting a cat.

We made no discoveries in our partnered dissections.

No new tendon or connective tissue. Nothing,

we hadn’t learned first in our textbook.

No hint of the mystery, no fuller understanding

of life, or death, of the process when blood stops

flowing and one understands completely

how to be alone.